WITH THE FARMERS

By Prof. W. F. MASSEY

Tuesday, January 27, 1914.

W. F. Massey.

Fall Plowing—Sandy Land.

I have noticed this fall that many farmers have taken advantage of the mild weather to plow their land. This will have a good effect mechanically on a heavy clay loam, but I have seen many fields of sandy soil recently turned over and left bare. These will lose more than gain by the fall plowing, and will be more leachy than ever. Fall plowing, if done early enough to sow rye on the land may be a very good practice, but I very much dislike to see land, even the heavy clay soil, lying bare in the winter rains and losing fertility while gaining in mellowness. Bare land in our climate is always bad. It may be all right to plow late and leave the land rough in winter in sections where it is locked up by frost all winter, but here, where we have more rain than deep freezing it is all wrong.

Every day I get letters from farmers asking advice, and saying that their land is poor. What has made it poor, if it was formerly fertile? If you have owned that land for years, and it remains poor, are you not responsible for its poverty? I will be glad when any farmer will be ashamed to say that his land is poor, after he has been cultivating it for years. There is very little land in Virginia or North Carolina which was not fertile when the forest was first cleared from it. But year after year we have been using up what it took the forest ages to accumulate, and we find that Nature has locked up her stores and will only release them to the man who does something towards restoring the new ground conditions. We have in our red clay uplands an inexhaustible store of potash for instance, but with the humus all burnt out this insoluble potash is unavailable, and only when we have restored the humus will the organic acids aid us in releasing the potash. The greatest deficiency in these soils aside from nitrogen is in phosphoric acid. Much of this too may be there in an insoluble form, and only waiting for the humus restoration to release it. We can get the nitrogen in abundance through the use of the legumes, but where the phosphorus is deficient, it must be supplied artificially. The hillside pastures have been losing phosphorus in the bones of all the animals raised on them, till there are thousands of acres of so-called pastures that grow nothing but poverty grass and sorrel, and the owners are afraid to break them for fear of the washing, while in many so-called pastures there are worse gullies than anywhere else, simply because the soil has been packed till the only way for the water to go is downhill.

One has well described a Southern pasture as a place where no grass grows, and the pastures, like the cultivated fields, have grown poor because the matters that made them fertile once have been carried away. Now it is easy to make these hillside pastures real pastures, for I have done it, by deep plowing and subsoiling to make a deep loose bed to hold on to the rains instead of letting them run downhill, and the man who keeps saying every year that his land is poor is responsible for its poverty. Let us have a change in this respect in Virginia, for I want to repeat it that in all the red hills of Virginia the only fertilizer one needs to buy, if he farms well, is phosphoric acid in some form. Only this and nothing more is needed to be bought by the farmer who farms in a good rotation and grows plenty of peas and clover and uses them to feed stock, and saves and uses his manure.

Growing Sweet Peas.

A lady correspondent asks: "Can I grow sweet peas where lima beans were last summer? When is the best time to sow them? Can I grow them along a wire-netting fence, and what sort of fertilizer should be used? Please add any hints that will be useful?" Sweet peas are easily grown if you get them early enough, for they soon fail in hot weather. In a fairly fertile soil you will need no fertilizer, but a mulch of stable manure on the ground will be a help in retaining moisture. You can sow them either in the fall or winter. I have some now ten inches high, from fall seed, but I make my main sowing the first good spell after New Year's Day. If your soil is sandy and not very strong, dig a trench a foot deep along where the row is to be and fill it half full of old fine manure and cover with soil. Then sow the seed rather thickly and cover them six inches deep. They will do very well where the lima beans were last year, and I always plant next a wire-netting fence on which they can climb. Do not bother with the cupid or dwarf kinds, but plant the tall-growing Spencer varieties. I find that they do best in a situation where they get the morning sun and are shaded from the afternoon sun, and plenty of water is an advantage. I plant mine where they can be reached by the garden hose and water them well daily in dry weather. You must plant early or you will get few flowers.

The Yokohama Velvet Bean.

A correspondent in North Carolina sends me a clipping from a Raleigh paper giving a wonderful account of what the writer calls the Yokohama Velvet bean, which he says matures in central North Carolina where the old velvet beans do not ripen seed. The writer says that the vines grow twenty to thirty feet long and an acre will make 150 bushels of nitrogen. Perhaps he meant pounds, and that would be a big quantity, and how he found it out without a complete chemical analysis of the plant, roots and crop I cannot say. He says this is the first time these beans have been grown here and that they came from China. And yet he gives a Japanese name. The clipping seems to be more an advertisement of the fact that the writer has a nursery than a mere news article, and according to law it should have been marked advertisement. I know nothing about any velvet bean of this name. I have some beans that differ in color from the old velvet beans, which are said to be earlier, and which I expect to plant and test the coming spring. But it will be wise to go slow on anything that is brought out with such a flourish, and wait till the experiment stations have tested and reported on it. These things are generally money-making schemes.

A new velvet bean of such earliness and value would be very likely to have gotten into the hands of the explorers of the Department of Agriculture before any private speculator got them. It may be that this is the same bean that has been sent me for trial, and the exploiter has simply given it a new name. Or it may be simply what we call a sprout from the old velvet bean which I believe did come from China. There seems to be a tendency this winter to get up wonderful tales about new beans, some of which I have written about. Now whether the accounts of this velvet bean are correct as to its earliness or not, I cannot say, but I had rather trust a report from an experiment station or the Department of Agriculture than a tale in a newspaper, the editor of which does not know enough of plants to detect a fraud.

Fertilizing Onions.

"Kindly give your opinion of the following fertilizing plan for onions. Soil fair sandy loam. Twenty tons of stable manure plowed under with dead pea vines. One thousand pounds of 16 per cent acid phosphate, plowed in and harrowed before planting, or rather transplanting, and 800 pounds of a home mixture containing 4 per cent of ammonia, 7 per cent phosphoric acid and 10 per cent potash, to be applied after growth has started in late March."

From the dead pea vines and the stable manure you will get a large amount of nitrogen and organic matter, and the immediate availability of the ammonia, as you call it, in the home mixture, will depend on the materials used in mixing it. What amount of nitrogen you will get in all cannot be estimated. Your 4 per cent ammonia would be about 3.45 per cent nitrogen. It would seem to me that if there is anything wrong in your manuring, it will be in an excess of nitrogen, which may cause thick-necked onions. But as you are using a large amount of phosphoric acid and potash, they may balance the nitrogen and give you a good crop. In fact, you will have to make a large crop to warrant such liberal fertilization, and, of course, you know that it does not pay to plant onions in rows wide enough for horse cultivation, but that the hand implements must be used. I sow the seed in a cold frame under glass in middle of January, and the plants will then be large enough for transplanting in early March, if they are gradually hardened off to the outer air. I shall be interested in knowing the results from your fertilization. Stable manure varies so much in its composition that one can hardly estimate the value of any sample. But you will find, I think, that if the manure is fresh you had better get it spread on the land at once and let it lie on the surface till the 1st of March before turning it under. The transplanting method is excellent for Bermuda onions and the Spanish and Italian varieties, but I have never found it of any advantage with the American varieties like the Southport and Danvers Globe and the Red Wethersfield. In fact, I have grown fine Bermuda onions from direct sowing of the seed in the open ground, but I have no doubt that the transplanting method will make larger onions. It is the only way to get the great Giant Gibraltar and the Denia Spanish onions as large as those imported. The Colorado grower who sent me some time ago six onions that weighed nearly twelve pounds, produced them by the transplanting method. You will find that it is an advantage to sow the seed rather thinly so as to get stout plants for the transplanting, and in transplanting I clip about one-third of the roots and tops off, and find this an advantage too.

My onions that were planted from sets in the fall and are intended only for green onions, are now getting a heavy mulch between the rows of rotten street sweepings. I find that these sweepings from the paved streets, after lying all summer on the dump, are in better shape for garden work than the strawy stable manure, if used very heavily. I am using the sweepings at rate of sixty tons an acre on my garden, and will add in the spring acid phosphate and potash mixture 8-10 at rate of 1,000 pounds an acre.

Our local supply of stable manure is so full of rough corn stalks that I cannot use it in garden crops, and the New York manure has gone up out of reach at $3.25 a ton on the switch, while I get the street sweepings for 50 cents a ton, and I believe that they will give as good results as the New York manure full of waste hay and straw. In fact, when the farmers found that I was starting in on the dump they at once bought up the whole accumulation of hundreds of loads. These street sweepings are mainly horse droppings, but lack the urine. But they do furnish a good deal of nitrogen, and organic matter, and being fine and rotten, are better suited to garden work than fresh manure. After paying for hauling and spreading, they cost me about $1 a ton. I find them very useful, too, in mixing up a compost with rotten sods for the greenhouse pots.

With such a compost, in which some fine bone meal is used, I can fill four-inch pots with it, and plant seeds of cucumbers and cantaloupes and lima beans in the pots, and pack them under the double glazed hot-bed sashes in late March, and can knock them out after frost disappears, and plant them, and get a fair earlier crop than from planting the seed in the open ground.

RADIUM NOT SURE CURE FOR CANCER

Its Use Still Experimental, and Many Cases End Fatally.

OUTCOME IS PROBLEMATICAL

Scientists Testify Before Committee in Contest to Reserve Ore-Bearing Lands.

Washington, January 26.—Radium as a cure for cancer still is in an experimental stage, and its use in the treatment of internal cancer results fatally in a large percentage of cases, according to the testimony before the House Mines Committee to-day of Dr. William H. Campbell, director of the Radium Clinic of Pennsylvania. Dr. Campbell told the committee that, so far as the deeper cancers are concerned, "we cannot tell to-day what the outcome of the radium treatment will be."

"We can tell," he said, "that there is a disappearance of the tumor; that the radium causes the disintegration of the tissue of the cancer, but something is created in that disappearance which is absorbed by the blood, and which kills my patients. I cannot tell, nobody can tell, for four or five years, just what the result will be."

"How many of your patients have died as a result of your treatment?" asked Representative Byrne, of South Carolina.

Two Out of Five End Fatally.

Dr. Campbell demurred at this, but finally said that two out of five of the cases treated ended fatally. He added that all were cases where the disease would have resulted in death in a few months without treatment.

Dr. Campbell said that at the present price of radium, the cost to patients ought not to be prohibitive. "I can treat patients at 4 cents per milligram of radium per hour on an investment of $3,000, and double my money in a year," he declared.

Dr. Francis B. Donaghue, of Boston, urged that the committee include, in any legislation for protecting the radium supply "substitutes for radium." He said that meso-thorium, a much cheaper product than radium, was equally effective.

James C. Gray, general counsel for the Radium Chemical Company, told the committee that radium treatment had relieved him of cancer, after several ineffective operations. He opposed government interference with the production of radium.

Dr. John T. Anderson, director of the hygienic laboratory, of the United States Public Health Service, declared that the Public Health Service was in a position to take charge of the production of radium for the benefit of the entire country.

Secretary of the Interior Lane told the committee that Congress should break up "the monopoly that keeps radium at a fabulously prohibitive price," and enact legislation to put the curative mineral on the market cheaply for large numbers of sufferers. He said there was no intention to lock up the mineral or lands indefinitely, but simply to get radium out for public use, where it would not be in the hands of a monopoly.

Proposal of Secretary.

Secretary Lane's proposal was to divide a certain area into tracts of 360 acres, allow exclusive licenses to prospect, and if a prospector found radium to allow him all the usual rights, except that the government would take 20 or 25 per cent of the radium obtained. He would give the government absolute control over a certain definite area for the development of radium on its own initiative.

"I believe that we should not be confined to developing the ores on any single withdrawn area," said Secretary Lane. "We should say to all the prospectors in the West: 'Go out and find these ores; the government will buy the ore from you at a reasonable compensatory price, and will reduce the ores ourselves.' Thus we would have all of the radium ores that might be discovered at our service.

"We have demands from the United States hospitals for more radium than we can hope to secure in the near future. But I believe that we should place supplies of radium in hospitals in cities throughout the country, where it would be readily available to the greatest possible number of people."

AMUSEMENTS.

Bijou—Grayce Scott Company, in "Sherlock Holmes," matinee and night.
Lyric—Keith Vaudeville, matinee and night.
Colonial—Vaudeville and pictures.

Yiddish Players in Broad Farce.

For more than three hours last night the largest audience that a Yiddish company has ever attracted to the Academy of Music, and, incidentally, one of the few big houses of the season, rocked and roared at the unique style of comedy offered by Mme. B. Thomeshefsky, in "The Green Boy."

As the title indicates, the story, such as it is, is based upon the appearance, adventures and eventual Americanization of a "greenhorn," or newly arrived immigrant. But this piece proved to be a farce so broad as to be rather a burlesque or caricature, while its construction was so loose as to render the play incoherent in the extreme.

Nevertheless, Mme. Thomeshefsky and an unusually capable company presented it in such a manner that it provoked peal after peal of apparently uncontrollable laughter from the rise of the curtain to its final fall. Nor was the laughter diminished in the least by the fact that the play was not only broad in the sense that it lacked any sort of subtlety, but was extremely broad in the more or less colloquial meaning of the word. As many of the lines were translated by my indispensable and obliging interpreter, a Russian linguist, who is a living demonstration of the theory that a man who can speak Russian can speak anything, they were unprintable, while frequently the action on the stage spoke even more strongly. But it was all done with a sort of Elizabethan freedom, a lack of suggestiveness—since everything that was suggested was spoken right out in meeting—that robbed it of pruriency.

And Mme. Thomeshefsky, with a face like Viola Allen's, played the part of the "greenhorn" with an irresistible boyishness, tomboyishness indeed, that marked her as a very accomplished actor. Her ability would have been recognized even without her one moment of seriousness, when placing a photograph of her father and mother between two candles before her, she chanted the "Kadesh" with intense dramatic appeal.

Further, and for this much thanks, the voice of the prompter was still in the land. Every member of the company knew his part and played it with the skill that almost invariably distinguishes the Yiddish actor.

After seeing even an ordinary Yiddish company—and Mme. Thomeshefsky's is somewhat extraordinary—one frequently smiles at the comparative incompetency of many of our own leading men and women, who draw salaries that are princely measured by those paid these really wonderful natural actors.

Douglas Gordon.

Lyric Strong in Small Acts.

Again this week the strength of the Lyric's bill lies not in its headliner, but in the variety and appeal of the smaller and less loudly heralded acts that precede and follow it.

One of Jesse L. Lasky's vaudeville productions, "The Rest Cure," in which Alan Brooks is starred, occupies the place of honor on the program, but, except for the gyrations of Brooks himself on a spiral stairway and his impersonation of a man on the jagged edge of delirium tremens, the act has little merit.

"Count" Beaumont, the only melodramatic card and coin manipulator that has appeared in Richmond, opens the bill with an exhibition of dexterous palming and several cabinet tricks, which combine to form a fairly good, but very slow, act.

In a song, dance and patter skit, called "A Regular Club Fellow," Harry H. Richards and Bessie Kyle score one of the most decided hits of the entire bill. The skit part is trifling, but the succeeding songs and dances put over are executed with finish and genuine showmanship, while the unusual attractiveness of Miss Kyle, as well as her lovely voice, makes the act one of the best doubles of the season.

Etta Bryan, Roy Sumner and Company present a sketch, "A College Proposition," which is far above the average comedy-drama offering of like character.

Another popular turn is that of Joe and Eernie Van, in an entertaining mixture of comedy and harmony. The tall one of the two is a pleasant-looking chap, who fills in successfully, while the one that Peter Newell drew supplies a brand of amusement peculiarly his own, and both make music.

Andy Rice, a Potash-and-Perlmutter monologist, works easily and cleverly and pulls some laughable stuff, mixed—at least yesterday afternoon—with an occasional bit of inexcusable coarseness.

The bill closes with the turn of the Ishikawa Brothers, who present a superb exhibition of hand-standing, executed with the certainty and polish that distinguish all the stage work of the Japanese. D. G.

Choose for Yourself.

Of the five acts at the Colonial this week, it is hard to pick the feature.

The Darlings open the bill with what is probably the best ladder and trapeze act ever seen in the house. Although a "dumb" turn, it goes over not only by reason of the clever work of the team, but partly because of the personality of its members.

Tabir and Calir, two young women, follow with songs of the whistleable variety, and George Fredo and Anita Primrose offer an amusing comedy skit punctuated by musical numbers.

Good old John Healy, who isn't old at all, preaches his famous sermon as "The Cullud Pahson," and gets as many laughs as in his minstrel days, while Mogar's Manikins amuse the audience with seven or eight acts of "blockhead vaudeville."

Good motion pictures complete the bill. T. M.

We've Nearly Caught Him.

We are on the trail of "Sherlock Holmes"; we'll catch up with him tomorrow at the Bijou and expatiate upon his methods.

BOY SPREADS FIRE AMONG RELATIVES

Five Are Burned to Death as Results of Coal-Oil Explosion.

Quebec, January 26.—Thirteen-year-old Wilfrid Robin, with his clothes afire after an explosion of coal oil, with which he was attempting to light a stove, rushed among his relatives at the Robin home, at 3 Dame De Rossire, to-day and communicated the flames to nine other persons. Five, including the boy, were burned to death and another is dying. The dead are:

Wilfrid Robin.
Mrs. Joseph Robin and her three-weeks-old baby.
Alma Labreeque, five.
Joseph Labreeque, six.

Joseph Robin probably will not live. Two Robin children and Edmund Labreeque survived the tragedy.

READY TO BUILD HOME FOR ELKS

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]

Roanoke, Va., January 26.—Construction of the national home of the Benevolent, Protective Order of Elks at Bedford City, Va., will be begun this week, according to S. J. Householder, representing the construction firm of P. J. Moran Company, of Chicago, who will build the structure.

The "home" is to cost $260,000, and will comprise eight buildings—six dormitories, an administration building and a hospital.

The dormitories are 34 by 97 feet in dimension, and the administrative building is to be 250 feet in length, with several "offsets," or L's. The structure is to be of concrete, frame tile walls, with a white cement exterior.

The style of architecture is German, of the seventeenth century period.